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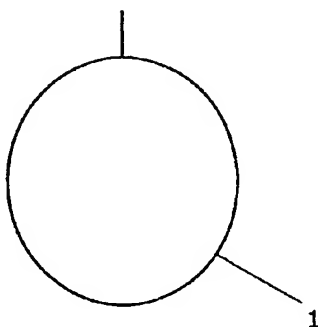
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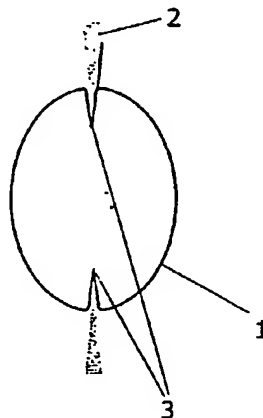
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(54) Title: METHOD OF MANUFACTURING THIN-WALLED CONTAINERS FROM FILM WEBS AND PRODUCTION FACILITY FOR CARRYING OUT THE METHOD



a



b



c

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to a method of manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs comprising the steps of: (a) manufacturing a tubular structure from at least one film web; (b) forming at least one fold projecting into the tubular structure; (c) ultrasonically joining sections of film webs of the folded tubular structure lying flat and parallel on top of one another to form the containers; and a production facility for carrying out the method of the invention.

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Method of manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs
and production facility for carrying out the method

The invention relates to a method of manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs and a production facility for carrying out the method.

It is known to fill liquid consumer products in particular, such as soaps, detergents and foodstuffs in stable standing containers made of plastics material, which are known as pouches, and which are manufactured from thin-walled film webs.

In addition, DE 100 27 735 C1 teaches ultrasonic welding of overlapping film webs for sealing filled thin-walled containers.

EP 0 917 946 A3 describes a method of manufacturing standing containers made of plastics material, in which a number of welding units are used to form the various seams by heat-fusing film webs. A problem in heat-fusing is ensuring a constant seam quality. Furthermore, the tools needed are relatively complex and expensive, and it is difficult and time-consuming to adapt them to new container shapes.

The object of the present invention is therefore to provide a method of manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs which overcomes the disadvantages of the prior art. A further object of the invention consists in providing a production facility for carrying out the method.

The first object is achieved in accordance with the invention by a method comprising the steps of:

- a) manufacturing a tubular structure from at least one film web;
- b) forming at least one fold projecting into the tubular structure;

- c) ultrasonically joining sections of film webs of the folded tubular structure lying flat and parallel on top of one another to form the containers.

By manufacturing a tubular structure from at least one film web and folding the structure inwards, it is possible to create a blank in a continuous production process, from which standing containers with very high tear resistance can be produced in virtually any shape desired, using universal ultrasonic welding devices.

In an advantageous embodiment, the tubular structure can be produced from a film web by folding over the film web in the longitudinal direction of the film web and joining together the adjacent lateral edges of the folded film web. In this way, the containers can be produced one after the other from a single film web in a conveyor-belt process.

In another embodiment, the tubular structure can be manufactured from two film webs of the same or different widths lying flat and parallel on top of one another, by joining together the adjacent lateral edges of the two film webs. The bottom for a container to stand on can optionally be manufactured from one film web or from the two film webs. A joint is provided on the two longer lateral edges of the film webs, in the longitudinal direction in each case. Increasing the width and designing the geometrical shape of each seam appropriately improves the stability of the container.

In a third advantageous embodiment, the tubular structure can be manufactured by placing two flat, parallel top-film webs together, one on top of the other, moving one side-film web in each case to the lateral edges of the flat, parallel top-film webs lying on top of the other, folding in the side-film webs and joining the respective mutually adjacent lateral edges of a side and top-film web.

Preferably, two diametrically opposing folds are formed in the tubular structure, each of which forms a container bottom. If the top-film webs are cut apart in the longitudinal direction, two containers per longitudinal portion can be produced in this way. In order to make optimum use of the material, the two diametrically opposing containers, especially the moulded containers with

curved contours, should be symmetrical mirror images of one another. The folds are preferably W-shaped, though multiple folding (WW-shaped etc.) is also possible.

In addition, there is an advantageous method in which ultrasonic welding and ultrasonic cutting are used to shape the contours of the container in the area between the two diametrically opposing folds, and to design the area of the folds as the bottom for the container to stand on. It is, for example, possible for opposite corners of the folds to be welded together.

The quality in manufacturing the tubular structure can be improved by blowing compressed air into the at least one film web. This simplifies the formation of the folds.

It is particularly advantageous to provide an intermediate layer in the fold which is designed in such a way that the film webs are prevented from fusing in the area of the intermediate layer. In this way, film webs lying on top of one another can deliberately be only partially welded together, such as to form the bottom for a container to stand on. The intermediate layer can, for example, be a metal coating joined integrally to the at least one film web, a travelling disc rotating in the fold or a metal strip used to form the fold.

In addition, it is advantageous for the film webs to be fused together in the vicinity of their folding edges in the longitudinal direction of the tubular structure in order to form sealing seams. This reduces the risk of the container's unintentionally tearing open in the region of the folds, i.e. of the container bottom. The folding edges located beside a sealing seam can, for example, form a loop in cross-section, so that, if the sealing seam tears open, the contents of the container are trapped by the loop and do not run out.

Transverse sealing seams in the film webs, which serve to seal the film web in a cross-machine direction, ought preferably to be designed in a saw-tooth shape or in some similar irregular manner in order to ensure that energy is transferred evenly during ultrasonic welding. In this way, the transverse sealing seams can, for example, also be designed as curved lines, whereas the cutting

edges of the containers ought preferably to be straight, for optical reasons. An even energy transfer can also be achieved by feeding the film web obliquely towards a rotating guide roll and subsequently performing ultrasonic welding with an ultrasonic welding device. The most important point here, in view of the relatively high production speeds, is that any transverse seams which form suddenly, involving changing power input requirements, are avoided.

Ultrasonic cutting of the containers is preferably performed by punching out cutting lines in advance and releasing the pre-punched containers from the at least one film web. The advantage of pre-punched is that the tool is not exposed to so much wear, since the cutting tool no longer necessarily has to rest completely on the workbench or guide roll with the relatively powerful force required.

Especially in the production of container prototypes, it is advantageous for film webs to be folded in a frame and for the folded film webs to be moved on a supporting table relative to an ultrasonic welding device in order to shape the containers.

It is particularly preferred to use a method in which the at least one film web is pre-punched in order to create a weakened tearing line to open the container.

It can likewise be provided for at least one film web to be profiled in order to form the weakened tearing line to open the container.

The weakened tearing line is preferably worked in continuously.

It is particularly preferred for the weakened tearing line to be formed by pre-punching or profiling by means of ultrasound. The tearing line ought preferably to be curved, in order to ensure an even transfer of energy during production of the tearing line.

It is also especially preferable if, in the case of a container manufactured from a multi-layer laminate, an inner film web of the container is designed more weakly in order to form the tearing line.

In addition, it can preferably be provided for a film web of the container to be weakened to form the tearing line before lamination of the film web.

The second object is achieved by a production facility for manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs according to the method described above with advancing means for continuously feeding at least one film web, folding means for creating a tubular structure from at least one film web and for forming at least one fold projecting into the tubular structure, and at least one ultrasonic welding device for joining portions of film webs of the folded tubular structure lying flat and parallel on top of one another in order to form the containers.

A first embodiment of the production facility is characterised by two advancing means for continuously feeding one film web in each case, the advancing means being designed such that the film webs are capable of being guided over one another such that they are flat and parallel, an ultrasonic welding device for joining the longitudinal side edges of the film webs lying on top of one another being disposed in the region of the lateral edges in each case.

A second embodiment of the production facility is characterised by having two advancing means for continuously feeding one top-film web each, the advancing means being designed in such a way that the top-film webs are guided over one another such that they are flat and parallel, and two further advancing means for continuously feeding one side-film web towards the lateral edges of the top-film webs lying flat and parallel, one ultrasonic welding device being disposed in each case to join together the longitudinal lateral edges of the adjacent top and side-film webs in the region of the lateral edges.

It is particularly advantageous if the ultrasonic welding device has a supporting table with ultrasonic vibrations applied to it for the film webs and a tool in contact with the film webs and the supporting table in the region of the junction points to be created. In this way, the tool can be easily adapted to the shape of the container to be manufactured, without the need to consider active parts of the ultrasonic generator or the propagation of waves in the tool.

The invention will now be described in more detail with reference to the attached drawings, in which:

Fig. 1a shows a section view of a tubular structure which has been manufactured from a film web that has been folded back and welded along the longitudinal edge;

Fig. 1b shows a section view of the structure according to Fig. 1a with two diametrically opposing W-shaped folds;

Fig. 1c shows a section view of the structure according to Fig. 1b after drawing;

Fig. 2 shows a perspective view of the folded structure with two diametrically opposing W-shaped folds for subsequently producing containers;

Fig. 3 shows a schematic section view of the folded structure from Figures 1 and 2;

Fig. 4 shows a perspective view of a first embodiment of a production facility of the invention for producing tubular structures from two film webs;

Fig. 5 shows a schematic section view of a structure produced from two film webs in accordance with an alternative embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 6 shows a schematic section view of a folded structure made from two top-film webs and two side-film webs in accordance with a third embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 7 shows a perspective view of a second embodiment of a production facility for manufacturing tubular structures from two top-film webs and two side-film webs;

Fig. 8 shows a perspective view of an ultrasonic-welding device for shaping containers from folded tubular structures;

Fig. 9 shows a perspective view of an ultrasonic-welding device for sealing filled containers;

Fig. 10 shows a schematic section view of a sealing seam with an adjacent loop;

Fig. 11 shows a perspective view of a folded structure with sealing seams;

Fig. 12 shows a schematic representation of saw-tooth-shaped or curved junction seams;

Fig. 13 shows a perspective sketch of a guide roll with a structure fed obliquely towards the guide roll;

Fig. 14 shows a schematic view of containers with curved tearing seams.

Figs. 1 a) to c) each show a section view of a tubular structure 1, which is produced from a film web folded over and fused at the longitudinal edge of mutually adjacent lateral edges 2. At two preferably diametrically opposing positions, the structure 1 is folded inwards. The folds 3 are preferably W-shaped. After that, the folded structure 1 is stretched, and then later on, the containers are shaped from the stretched structure 1 by ultrasonic welding and cutting.

The folds 3 serve here as bottoms for the containers to stand on. As can be seen from the perspective representation of the folded structure in Fig. 2, two container parts A per longitudinal portion can be produced in each case by cutting the structure 1 in the longitudinal direction. In order to make optimum use of the material, especially for the shaped containers with curved contours, the two diametrically opposing containers and their printed material should be symmetrical mirror images of one another.

Fig. 3 shows the structure 1 in a schematic section view. This makes it clear that a film web is folded over and welded together at the lateral edges 2 lying on top of one another. Next to the fused lateral edges 2 the structure 1 is folded in in order to form a first W-shaped fold 3. A further fold 3 is provided diametrically opposite the first fold 3, the folds 3 each forming a bottom for the container to stand on when it is produced.

Fig. 4 shows a production facility for manufacturing a tubular structure 1 from a film web 4, which is continuously unwound from a drum and guided by guide rollers 5 over a shaping wedge 6 and calender rolls 7 to fold the film web 4 over. At the upper edge of the folded film web, i.e. in the region of the longitudinal lateral edges, an ultrasonic welding device 8 is provided, in order to fuse together the mutually adjacent longitudinal lateral edges and thus to form the tubular structure 1. The ultrasonic welding device 8 has a fixed supporting table 9 to which an ultrasonic vibration is applied by means of a sonotrode, and a pressure roll 10 for pressing the longitudinal lateral edges of the film web 1 onto the supporting table 9. As a result of the pressure contact and the ultrasonic vibration, the film webs 1 located between the pressure roll 10 and the supporting table 9 are fused together.

Downstream of the ultrasonic welding device 8, further guide rolls 11 and 12 are provided. During the manufacture of the tubular structure 1, compressed air is blown into the structure 1 via a feed line 13, the guide rolls 11, 12 retaining the compressed air in the structure 1 and ensuring that the structure 1 is blown up into a hose-shaped balloon. By means of two plates 14 which act on the expanded structure 1 from the outside, the diametrically opposing W-shaped folds 3 are produced,

the folds 3 being fixed with calender rolls 15 by drawing the folded structure 1. The folded and drawn structure 1 is then fed in a horizontal position in feed direction X to an ultrasonic welding punch and/or ultrasonic cutting punch in which the container seams and, optionally, sealing seams are formed and the containers are punched out.

Fig. 5 shows a second embodiment of a structure 1a, which is formed by fusing two film webs 4a, 4b lying flat and parallel on top of one another, which may be of the same or different widths as desired. The bottom for a container to stand on can be produced from one film web or both film webs as desired. It becomes clear that a seam 2 is accordingly provided in the longitudinal direction on both longitudinal lateral edges of the film webs 4a, 4b. Each seam 2 can be executed as a straight or curved line or as an area of variable width and can in this way increase the solidity and stability of the container.

Fig. 6 indicates a third embodiment of a structure 1b, which comprises two top-film webs 4a, 4b lying flat and parallel on top of one another and two V-shaped side-film webs 16 folded inwards. In order to produce a folded structure 1b, the respective adjacent longitudinal lateral edges of the top and side-film webs 4a, 16 or 4b, 16 respectively are fused together ultrasonically.

Fig. 7 indicates an embodiment of a production facility for manufacturing the structure according to Fig. 6 with top and side-film webs 4a, 4b, 16a, 16b. The top-film webs 4a, 4b are first of all continuously unrolled from drums and guided flat and parallel to one another by guide rolls 5. Lateral guide rolls 17 are then used to urge apart the longitudinal lateral edges of the top guide webs 4a, 4b, which are guided by U-shaped bent deflection sheets 18. Side-film webs 16a, 16b, which are likewise continuously unrolled from drums, are then guided into these upwardly bent longitudinal lateral edges of the top-film webs 4a, 4b. Using ultrasonic welding devices 8 at both lateral edges of the top-film webs 4, the mutually adjacent longitudinal lateral edges both of a top-film web 4 and of a side-film web 16 are fused together, and in this way a hose-shaped folded structure 1b is produced. After that, the folded structure 1b is stretched with a stretching device 19 and fed horizontally to an ultrasonic welding/cutting device 20 to produce the longitudinal and transverse sealing seams and

separation points for the containers. The ultrasonic welding/cutting device 20 has a supporting table 21 with ultrasonic vibrations applied and a forming roll 22 with the contours of the seams and separation points to be formed. The supporting table 21 is flat and can thus be used universally. Only the passive forming roll 22 needs to be adapted to the contours to be created.

Fig. 8 indicates a different embodiment of an ultrasonic welding/cutting device 20 for forming the containers 23 from the folded structures 1. In this case, the seams and cutting points are formed with a corresponding passive punch 24, which is pressed onto an active supporting table 21 with ultrasonic vibrations applied to it.

It can further be seen from Fig. 8 that a metal strip 25 is inserted into the fold 3, which serves on the one hand to form the fold 3 and, on the other hand, is designed in such a way that no seam point is created in the region of the metal strip 25. In this way, when transverse seams are produced, only the corners of the W-shaped folds 3 need to be fused together, thus creating a container bottom which can stand securely, and whose standing surface will automatically be enlarged to the optimum extent because of the weight of the product with which it is filled.

As an alternative to this, the fusing or sealing of certain layers or regions can be prevented by a revolving disc, a cutting member which can be swung out by an articulation, or a material applied to the film web e.g. release varnish).

After the container 23 has been filled, the upper opening is sealed in a known manner. This can be done, as shown in Fig. 9 for example, by means of continuous ultrasonic welding by the ultrasonic welding device 8.

Fig. 10 shows a section of a container 23 with a sealing seam 26, which is provided for sealing purposes and to prevent the unintentional tearing of the container 23 in the region where the film web 4 is buckled. In the event that the sealing seam 26 leaks or fails, the buckling point in the film web 4 forms a loop 27 adjacent to the sealing seam, in which any fluid unintentionally escaping

through the sealing seam 26 is trapped. Furthermore, the formation of loops 27 acts as a precaution against possible damage especially to the multi-layer films at the sharp buckling points.

Fig. 11 indicates a perspective view of a folded structure 1, in which sealing seams 26 are provided at each of the three buckling points in the folds 3, which extend in the longitudinal direction X. The sealing seams 26 are advantageous particularly at these buckling points, because these buckling points are the weakest parts of the container 23.

In order to make reliable fusing or sealing of more than one layer of material possible, the longitudinal and transverse sealing ought to be performed at different stations. Via sealing stations upstream, the film web 4 is sealed along the longitudinal seams before entering cylinder sealing stations. The cylinder sealing station then effects the transverse sealing.

Alternatively, it is also possible first to seal only the inner central fold of the W-shaped fold 3.

It is also possible, in the region of thicker layers of material, to adapt the geometric shape of the tool and/or of the supporting table locally, by, for example, forming indentations / elevations in the sealing or cutting edges.

In the production of ultrasonic welding seams, attention should be paid to ensuring an even transfer of energy to the film webs 4. For this reason, any transverse seams which form suddenly, involving changing power input requirements, should be avoided. For this purpose, it is proposed that the seams 28 should be designed with a saw-tooth shape, for example (such as at an angle of about 5°), or curved, as shown in Figure 12. In that case, however, the cutting lines 29 ought preferably to be straight, for optical reasons.

An even transfer of energy can also be achieved, as sketched in Fig. 13, by feeding the film web 4 obliquely towards a guide roll 30, with an ultrasonic welding device 8 either acting directly on the

guide roll or adjacent to it. The angle of attack is preferably about 2 to 5° and determines the geometry of the working edges on the guide roll 30.

Fig. 14 shows a container 23 in a frontal view with a tearing line 31. The tearing line 31 is preferably created by weakening the film web 4, wherein, for example, an inner film web is optionally discontinuously perforated or continuously pre-punched and/or profiled. This can be done, for example, by a profiled roll before or after lamination of a film web, which is moved along the tearing line 31 on an ultrasound supporting table.

The tearing line 31 is preferably curved in order to ensure the optimum input of energy and ease of opening.

The features of the invention disclosed in the above description, in the claims and in the drawings may be essential either individually or in any combination in order to carry out the invention in its various embodiments.

Claims

1. A method of manufacturing thin-walled containers (23) from film webs (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) comprising the steps of:
 - a) manufacturing a tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b) from at least one film web (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b);
 - b) forming at least one fold (3) projecting into the tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b);
 - c) ultrasonically joining sections of film webs (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) of the folded tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b) lying flat and parallel on top of one another to form the containers (23) .
2. The method as claimed in Claim 1, characterised in that the tubular structure (1) is produced from a film web (4) by folding over the film web (4) in the longitudinal direction of the film web (4) and joining together the adjacent lateral edges of the folded film web (4).
3. The method as claimed in Claim 1, characterised in that the tubular structure (1a) is manufactured from two film webs (4a, 4b) lying flat and parallel on top of one another, by joining together the adjacent lateral edges of each of the two film webs (4a, 4b).
4. The method as claimed in Claim 1, characterised in that the tubular structure (1b) is manufactured by placing two flat, parallel top-film webs (4a, 4b) together, one on top of the other, moving one side-film web (16a, 16b) in each case to the lateral edges of the flat, parallel top-film webs (4a, 4b) lying on top of the other, folding in the side-film webs (16a, 16b) and joining the respective mutually adjacent lateral edges of a side (16a, 16b) and top-film web (4a, 4b).
5. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that two diametrically opposing folds (3) are formed in the tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b).

6. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the folds (3) are W-shaped.
7. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that ultrasonic welding and ultrasonic cutting are used to shape the contours of the container (23) in the area between the two diametrically opposing folds (3), and that the area of the folds (3) is designed as the bottom for the container (23) to stand on.
8. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised by blowing compressed air into the at least one film web (4) while manufacturing the tubular structure (1).
9. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised by an intermediate layer in the fold (3), the intermediate layer being designed in such a way that the film webs (4, 16) are prevented from fusing in the area of the intermediate layer.
10. The method as claimed in claim 9, characterised in that the intermediate layer is a metal coating joined integrally to the at least one film web (4, 16).
11. The method as claimed in Claim 9, characterised in that the intermediate layer is a travelling disc rotating in the fold (3).
12. The method as claimed in Claim 9, characterised in that the intermediate layer is a metal strip used to form the fold (3).
13. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the film webs (4, 16) are fused together in the vicinity of their folding edges in the longitudinal direction of the tubular structure (1) in order to form sealing seams (26).

14. The method as claimed in Claim 13, characterised in that the folding edges located beside a sealing seam (26) form a loop (27) in cross-section.
15. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that transverse sealing seams in the film webs (4, 16) are designed in a saw-tooth shape.
16. The method as claimed in Claim 15, characterised in that the transverse sealing seams form curved lines, and cutting edges of the containers (23) are designed straight.
17. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised by feeding the film web (4, 16) obliquely towards a rotating guide roll (30) and subsequently performing ultrasonic welding with an ultrasonic welding device (8).
18. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised by ultrasonic cutting of the containers (23) comprising the steps of: by punching out cutting lines in advance and releasing the pre-punched containers (23) from the at least one film web (4, 16).
19. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the film webs (4, 16) are folded in a frame and the folded film webs (4, 16) are moved on a supporting table relative to an ultrasonic welding device (8) in order to shape the containers (23).
20. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that at least one film web (4, 16) is pre-punched in order to create a weakened tearing line (31) to open the container (23).
21. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that at least one film web (4, 16) is profiled in order to form the weakened tearing line (31) to open the container (23).
22. The method as claimed in either of Claims 20 or 21, characterised in that the weakened tearing line (31) is worked in continuously.

23. The method as claimed in either of Claims 20 or 21, characterised in that the weakened tearing line (31) is formed by pre-punching or profiling by means of ultrasound.
24. A method as claimed in any of Claims 20 to 23, characterised in that the tearing line (31) is designed in a curved shape.
25. A method as claimed in any of Claims 20 to 24, characterised in that, in the case of a container (23) manufactured from a multi-layer laminate, an inner film web (4, 16) of the container (23) is designed more weakly in order to form the tearing line (31).
26. A method as claimed in any of Claims 20 to 25, characterised in that a film web (4, 16) of the container (23) is weakened to form the tearing line (31) before lamination of the film web.
27. A production facility for manufacturing thin-walled containers (23) from film webs (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) according to the method claimed in any of the preceding Claims, with advancing means for continuously feeding at least one film web (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b), folding means for creating a tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b) from at least one film web (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) and for forming at least one fold (3) projecting into the tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b), and with at least one ultrasonic welding device (8) for joining portions of film webs (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) of the folded tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b) lying flat and parallel on top of one another in order to form the containers (23).
28. The production facility as claimed in Claim 27, characterised by two advancing means for continuously feeding one film web (4a, 4b) in each case, the advancing means being designed such that the film webs (4a, 4b) are capable of being guided over one another such that they are flat and parallel, wherein an ultrasonic welding device (8) for joining the longitudinal side edges of the film webs (4a, 4b) lying on top of one another is disposed in the region of the lateral edges in each case.

29. The production facility as claimed in Claim 27, characterised by two advancing means for continuously feeding one top-film web (4a, 4b) each, the advancing means being designed in such a way that the top-film webs (4a, 4b) are guided over one another such that they are flat and parallel, and two further advancing means for continuously feeding one side-film web (16a, 16b) in each case towards the lateral edges of the top-film webs (4a, 4b) lying flat and parallel, one ultrasonic welding device (8) being disposed in each case to join together the longitudinal lateral edges of the adjacent top and side-film webs (4, 16) in the region of the lateral edges.

30. A production facility as claimed in any of Claims 27 to 29, characterised in that the ultrasonic welding device (8) has a supporting table (9) with ultrasonic vibrations applied to it for the film webs (4, 16) and a tool (10) in contact with the film webs (4, 16) and the supporting table (9) in the region of the junction points to be created.

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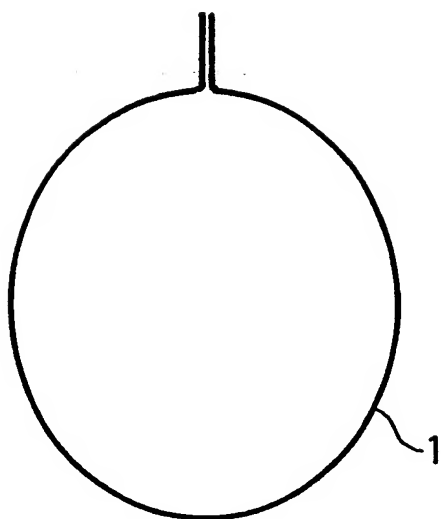


Fig. 1a

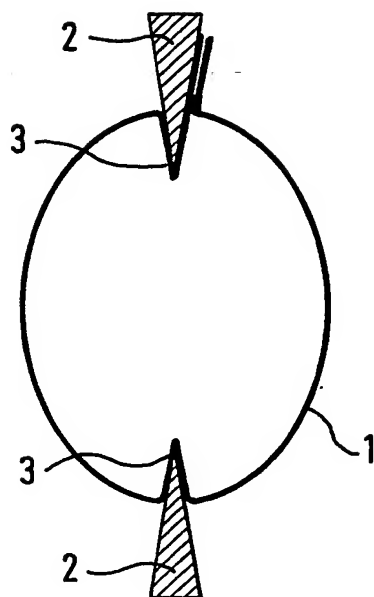


Fig. 1b

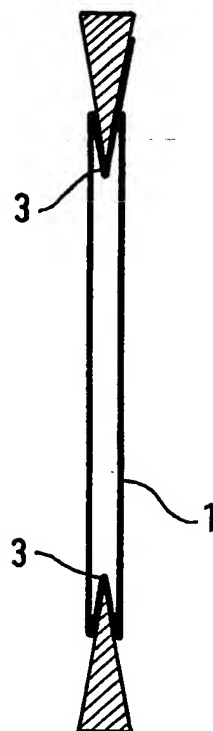


Fig. 1c

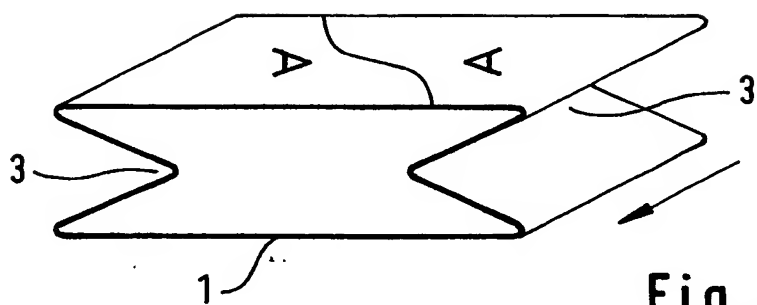


Fig. 2

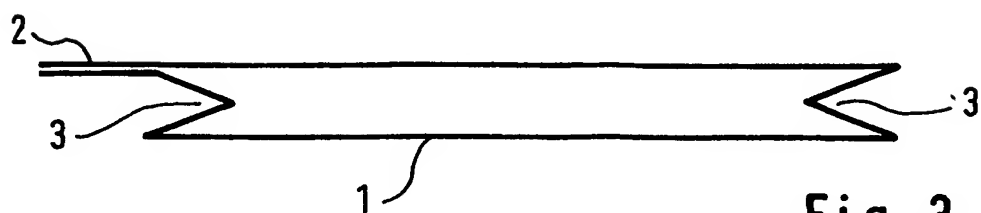


Fig. 3

2 / 6

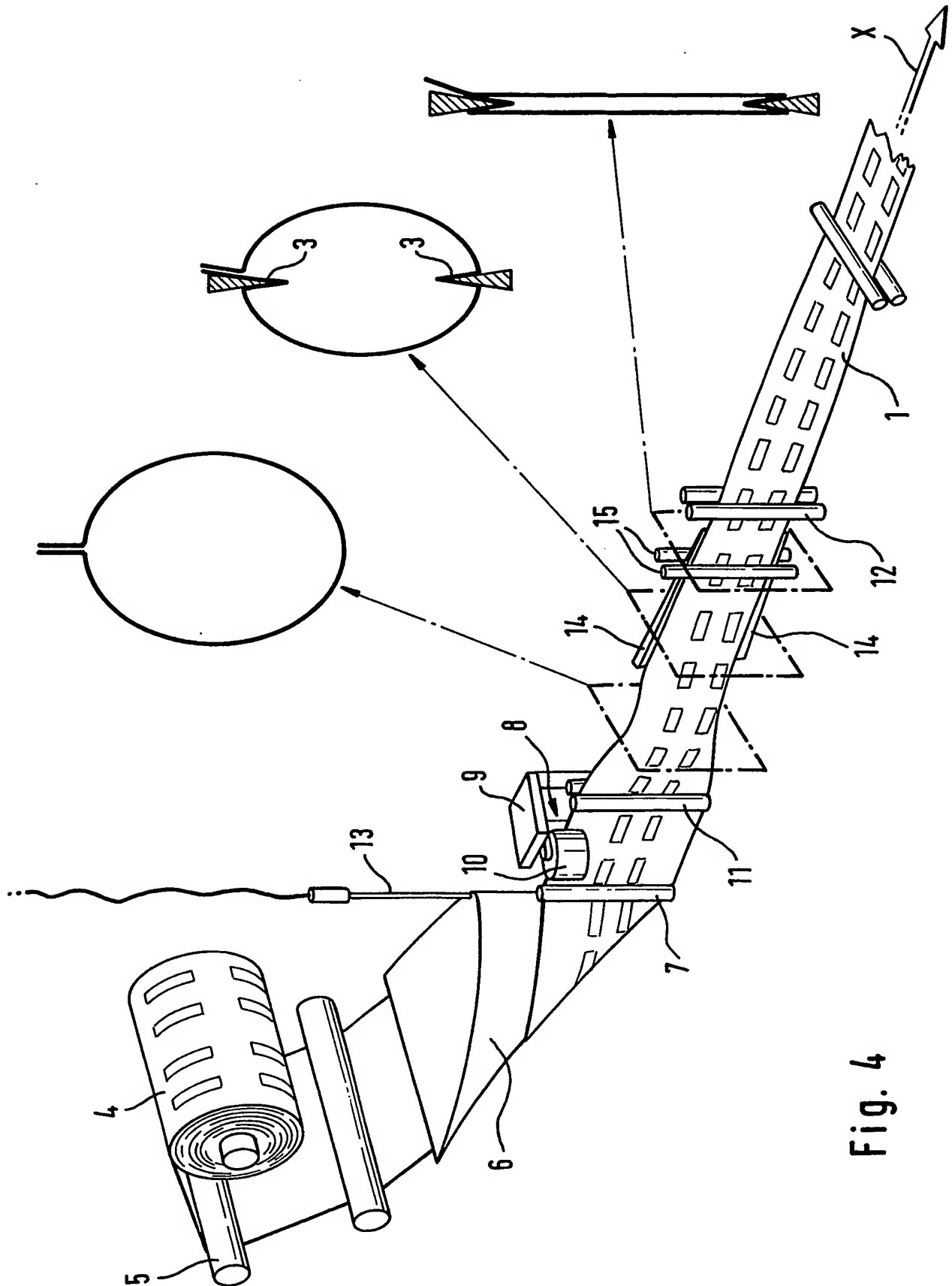


Fig. 4

3 / 6

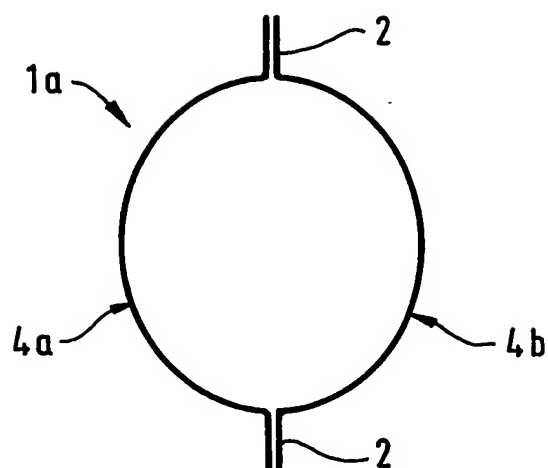


Fig. 5

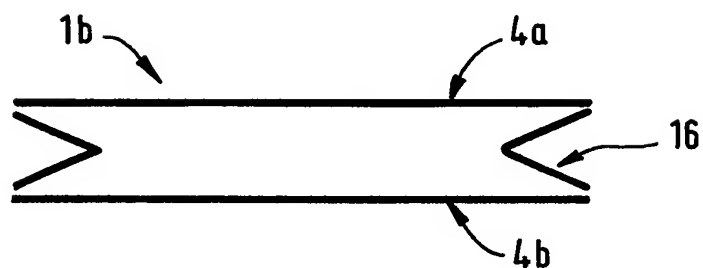


Fig. 6

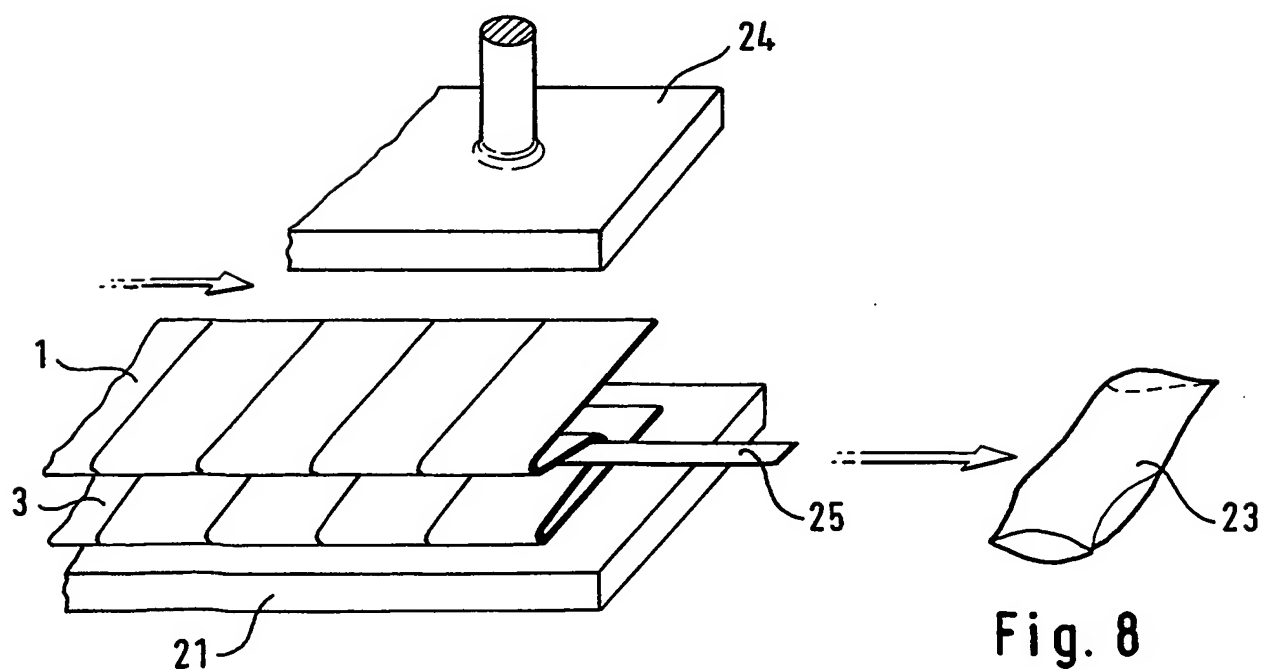


Fig. 8

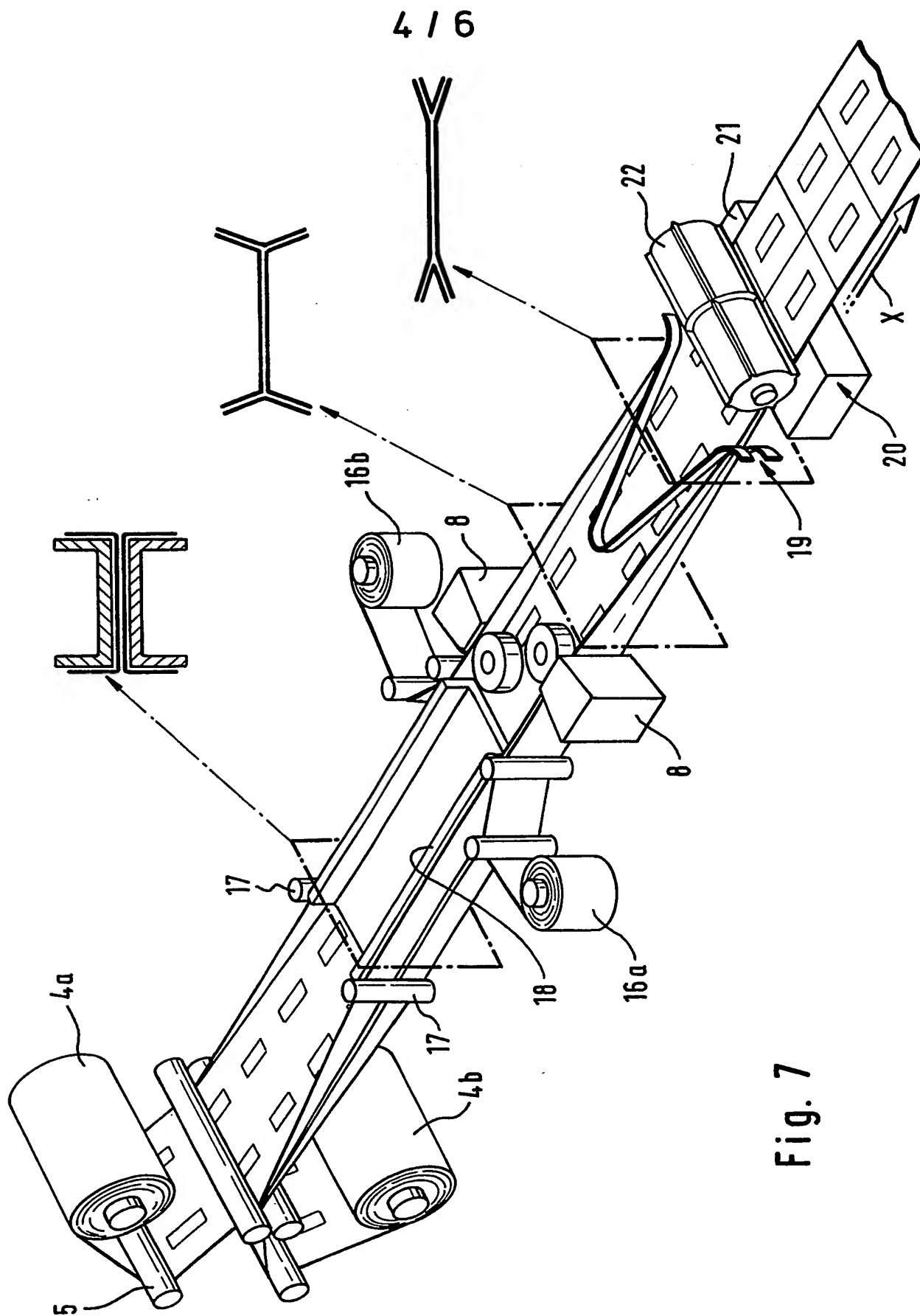


Fig. 7

5 / 6

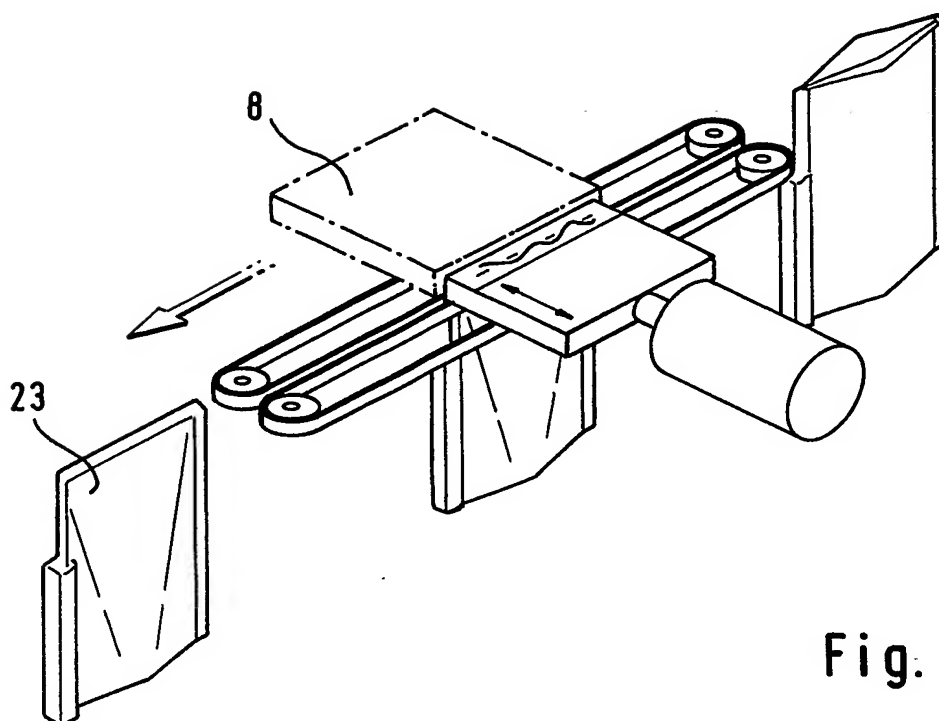


Fig. 9

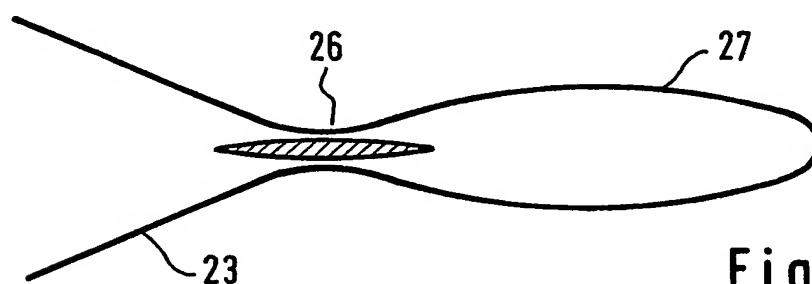


Fig. 10

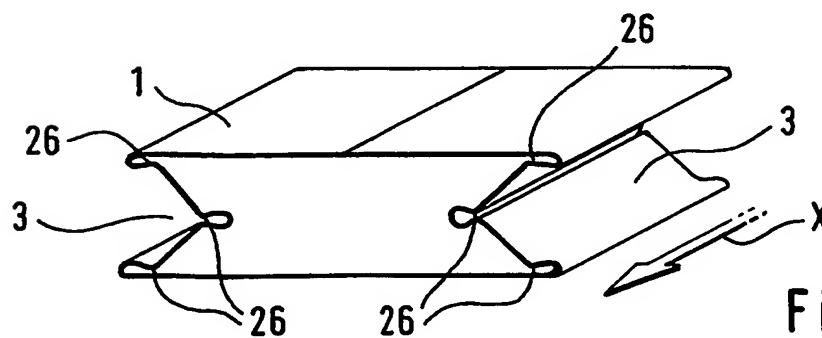


Fig. 11

6 / 6

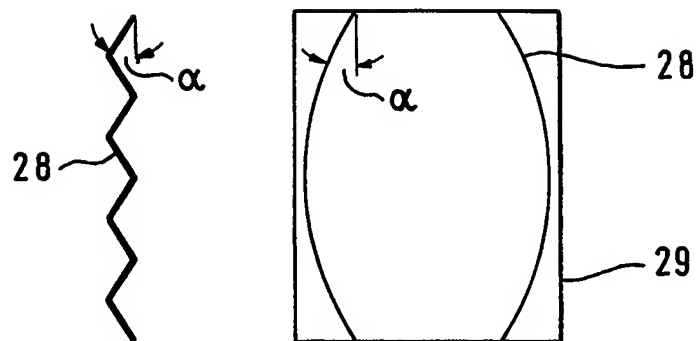


Fig. 12

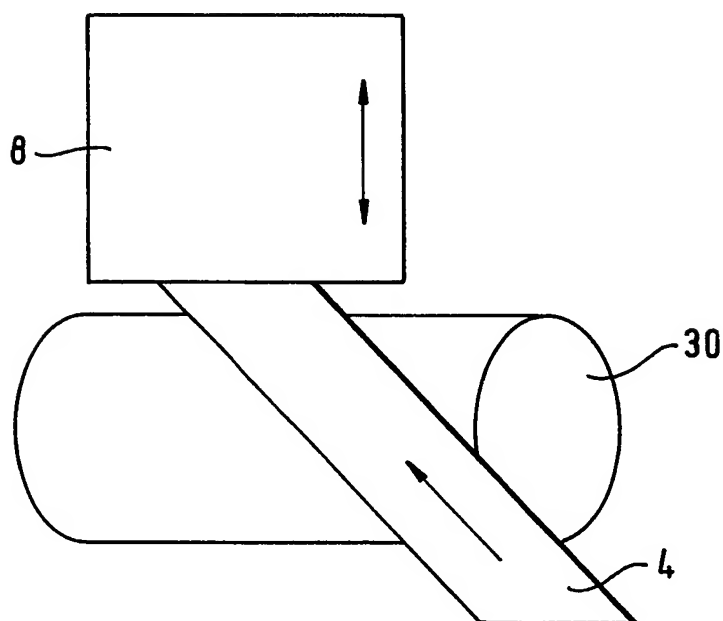


Fig. 13

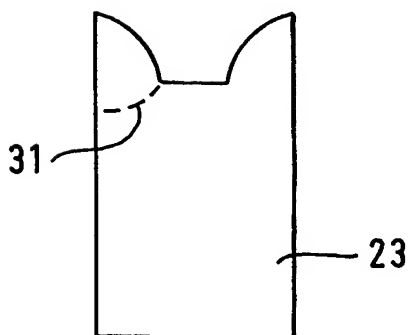


Fig. 14a

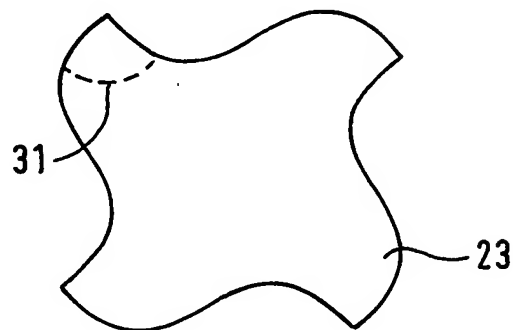


Fig. 14b

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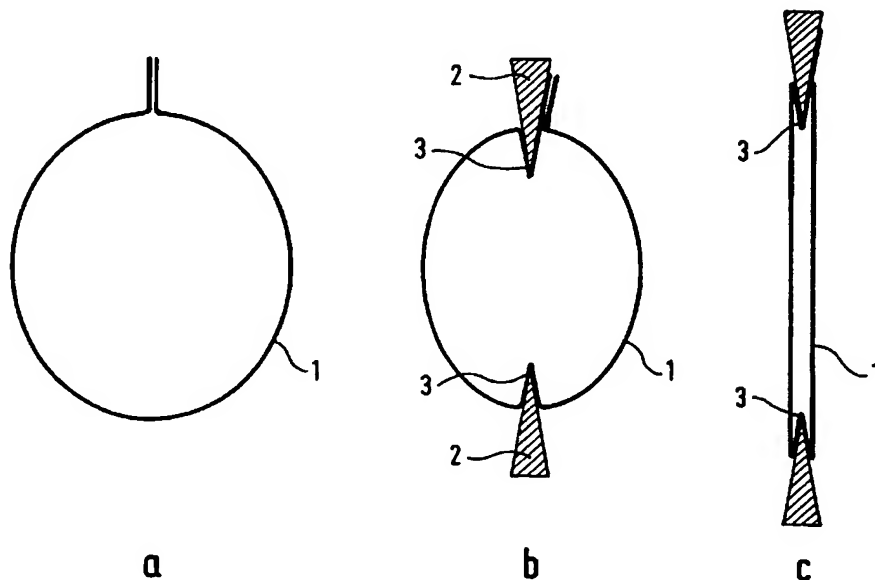
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102 27 502.5 19 June 2002 (19.06.2002) DE
- (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **MARS INCORPORATED** [US/US]; 6885 Elm Street, McLean, VA 22101-3883 (US).
- (72) Inventors; and
- (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): **MERKEN-SCHILLER, Richard** [DE/DE]; Am Mühlenturm 17, 40489 Düsseldorf (DE). **EBERHARDT, Stefan** [DE/DE]; Flandrische Strasse 18, 52076 Aachen (DE).
- (74) Agents: **WINKLER, Andreas** et al.; Boehmert & Boehmert, Hollerallee 32, 28209 Bremen (DE).
- (81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.
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- Published:
— with international search report

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: METHOD OF MANUFACTURING THIN-WALLED CONTAINERS FROM FILM WEBS AND PRODUCTION FACILITY FOR CARRYING OUT THE METHOD



(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to a method of manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs comprising the steps of: (a) manufacturing a tubular structure from at least one film web; (b) forming at least one fold projecting into the tubular structure; (c) ultrasonically joining sections of film webs of the folded tubular structure lying flat and parallel on top of one another to form the containers; and a production facility for carrying out the method of the invention.



— *before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments*

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/EP 03/06232

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC 7 B65B51/22 B65B43/04 B65B43/06 B31B23/00		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) IPC 7 B65B B31B		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
Electronic data base consulted during the International search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used) EPO-Internal		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	FR 2 587 935 A (CANTENOT FRANCOIS) 3 April 1987 (1987-04-03) the whole document	1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 30 20-26
Y	US 5 030 189 A (HIGHTOWER A DERRELL) 9 July 1991 (1991-07-09) the whole document	20-26
X	GB 957 487 A (ERIK JOHANSEN; PETER SKJODE KNUDSEN) 6 May 1964 (1964-05-06) abstract; figures 1-9	1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 30
X	US 4 517 790 A (KREAGER WILLIAM D) 21 May 1985 (1985-05-21) column 1, line 13 - line 66; figure 1	1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 30
-/--		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patent family members are listed in annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents : <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>*A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>*E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>*L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>*O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>*P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>*X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>*Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.</p> <p>*Z* document member of the same patent family</p> </div> </div>		
Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report	
19 March 2004	12.1.04. 2004	
Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel: (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer Damiani, A	

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/EP 03/06232

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 6 062 002 A (LEES JOHN ET AL) 16 May 2000 (2000-05-16) abstract; figures 8,9 ----	1,27,30
A	GB 1 214 709 A (KLEER-VU INDUSTRIES) 2 December 1970 (1970-12-02) page 1, line 42 - line 66 ----	1,2,5,6, 27,30
A	US 4 569 474 A (BUSCHOR JOSEF J ET AL) 11 February 1986 (1986-02-11) figures 3A-3D ----	1,2,5,6, 27,30
A	US 5 202 065 A (HINLEY ROBERT W ET AL) 13 April 1993 (1993-04-13) the whole document -----	20-26

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.
PCT/EP 03/06232

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the International Application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful International Search can be carried out, specifically:
3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

see additional sheet

As a result of the prior review under R. 40.2(e) PCT,
no additional fees are to be refunded.

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. ☒ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
20-26
4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this International Search Report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

- ☒ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.
☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

This International Searching Authority found multiple (groups of) inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. Claims: 1,2,5,6,27,30

Manufacturing containers from one film web

1.1. Claims: 1,2,27,30

Manufacturing containers from one film web

1.2. Claim : 5

Manufacturing containers with two diametrically opposing folds

1.3. Claim : 6

Manufacturing containers with W-shaped folds

2. Claims: 3, 4, 28, 29

Manufacturing containers from two film webs

3. Claims: 7, 19

Manufacturing containers and shaping them

4. Claim : 8

Manufacturing containers with the use of compressed air

5. Claims: 9-12

Manufacturing containers using an intermediate layer

6. Claims: 13-16

Manufacturing containers with special sealing seams

7. Claim : 17

Manufacturing containers while obliquely feeding the web

8. Claim : 18

Manufacturing containers by punching out cutting lines

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

9. Claims: 20-26

Manufacturing containers with tearing lines

Please note that all inventions mentioned under item 1, although not necessarily linked by a common inventive concept, could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/EP 03/06232

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
FR 2587935	A	03-04-1987	FR 2587935 A1	03-04-1987
US 5030189	A	09-07-1991	NONE	
GB 957487	A	06-05-1964	CH 392374 A	15-05-1965
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CZECHOWSKI, Pamela [DE/DE]; Von Rost-Strasse 40,
78259 Mühlhausen (DE).

(21) International Application Number:
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(74) Agents: **WINKLER, Andreas et al.**; Boehmert &
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(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU,
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CZ, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM,
HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK,
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(71) Applicant (*for all designated States except US*): **MARS
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VA 22101-3883 (US).

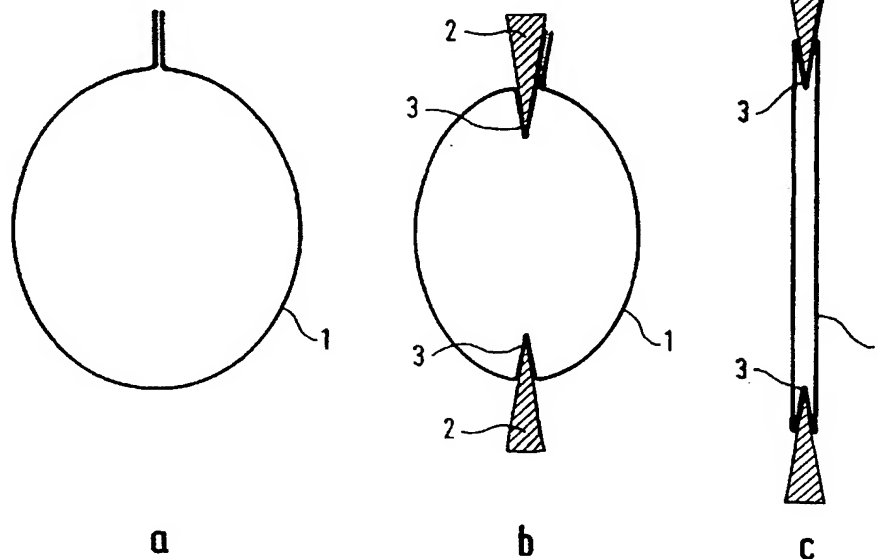
(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (*for US only*): **MERKEN-
SCHILLER, Richard** [DE/DE]; Am Mühlenturm
17, 40489 Düsseldorf (DE). **EBERHARDT, Stefan**
[DE/DE]; Flandrische Strasse 18, 52076 Aachen (DE).

(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM,
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Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM),
European patent (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE,
ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, RO,
SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM,
GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: **METHOD OF MANUFACTURING THIN-WALLED CONTAINERS FROM FILM WEBS AND PRODUCTION FACILITY FOR CARRYING OUT THE METHOD**



(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to a method of manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs comprising the steps of: (a) manufacturing a tubular structure from at least one film web; (b) forming at least one fold projecting into the tubular structure; (c) ultrasonically joining sections of film webs of the folded tubular structure lying flat and parallel on top of one another to form the containers; and a production facility for carrying out the method of the invention.

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WO 2004/000656 A3

Mars, Incorporated, 6885 Elm Street, 22101-3883 McLean, U.S.A.

Method of manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs
and production facility for carrying out the method

The invention relates to a method of manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs and a production facility for carrying out the method.

It is known to fill liquid consumer products in particular, such as soaps, detergents and foodstuffs in stable standing containers made of plastics material, which are known as pouches, and which are manufactured from thin-walled film webs.

In addition, DE 100 27 735 C1 teaches ultrasonic welding of overlapping film webs for sealing filled thin-walled containers.

EP 0 917 946 A3 describes a method of manufacturing standing containers made of plastics material, in which a number of welding units are used to form the various seams by heat-fusing film webs. A problem in heat-fusing is ensuring a constant seam quality. Furthermore, the tools needed are relatively complex and expensive, and it is difficult and time-consuming to adapt them to new container shapes.

The object of the present invention is therefore to provide a method of manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs which overcomes the disadvantages of the prior art. A further object of the invention consists in providing a production facility for carrying out the method.

The first object is achieved in accordance with the invention by a method comprising the steps of:

- a) manufacturing a tubular structure from at least one film web;
- b) forming at least one fold projecting into the tubular structure;

- c) ultrasonically joining sections of film webs of the folded tubular structure lying flat and parallel on top of one another to form the containers.

By manufacturing a tubular structure from at least one film web and folding the structure inwards, it is possible to create a blank in a continuous production process, from which standing containers with very high tear resistance can be produced in virtually any shape desired, using universal ultrasonic welding devices.

In an advantageous embodiment, the tubular structure can be produced from a film web by folding over the film web in the longitudinal direction of the film web and joining together the adjacent lateral edges of the folded film web. In this way, the containers can be produced one after the other from a single film web in a conveyor-belt process.

In another embodiment, the tubular structure can be manufactured from two film webs of the same or different widths lying flat and parallel on top of one another, by joining together the adjacent lateral edges of the two film webs. The bottom for a container to stand on can optionally be manufactured from one film web or from the two film webs. A joint is provided on the two longer lateral edges of the film webs, in the longitudinal direction in each case. Increasing the width and designing the geometrical shape of each seam appropriately improves the stability of the container.

In a third advantageous embodiment, the tubular structure can be manufactured by placing two flat, parallel top-film webs together, one on top of the other, moving one side-film web in each case to the lateral edges of the flat, parallel top-film webs lying on top of the other, folding in the side-film webs and joining the respective mutually adjacent lateral edges of a side and top-film web.

Preferably, two diametrically opposing folds are formed in the tubular structure, each of which forms a container bottom. If the top-film webs are cut apart in the longitudinal direction, two containers per longitudinal portion can be produced in this way. In order to make optimum use of the material, the two diametrically opposing containers, especially the moulded containers with

curved contours, should be symmetrical mirror images of one another. The folds are preferably W-shaped, though multiple folding (WW-shaped etc.) is also possible.

In addition, there is an advantageous method in which ultrasonic welding and ultrasonic cutting are used to shape the contours of the container in the area between the two diametrically opposing folds, and to design the area of the folds as the bottom for the container to stand on. It is, for example, possible for opposite corners of the folds to be welded together.

The quality in manufacturing the tubular structure can be improved by blowing compressed air into the at least one film web. This simplifies the formation of the folds.

It is particularly advantageous to provide an intermediate layer in the fold which is designed in such a way that the film webs are prevented from fusing in the area of the intermediate layer. In this way, film webs lying on top of one another can deliberately be only partially welded together, such as to form the bottom for a container to stand on. The intermediate layer can, for example, be a metal coating joined integrally to the at least one film web, a travelling disc rotating in the fold or a metal strip used to form the fold.

In addition, it is advantageous for the film webs to be fused together in the vicinity of their folding edges in the longitudinal direction of the tubular structure in order to form sealing seams. This reduces the risk of the container's unintentionally tearing open in the region of the folds, i.e. of the container bottom. The folding edges located beside a sealing seam can, for example, form a loop in cross-section, so that, if the sealing seam tears open, the contents of the container are trapped by the loop and do not run out.

Transverse sealing seams in the film webs, which serve to seal the film web in a cross-machine direction, ought preferably to be designed in a saw-tooth shape or in some similar irregular manner in order to ensure that energy is transferred evenly during ultrasonic welding. In this way, the transverse sealing seams can, for example, also be designed as curved lines, whereas the cutting

edges of the containers ought preferably to be straight, for optical reasons. An even energy transfer can also be achieved by feeding the film web obliquely towards a rotating guide roll and subsequently performing ultrasonic welding with an ultrasonic welding device. The most important point here, in view of the relatively high production speeds, is that any transverse seams which form suddenly, involving changing power input requirements, are avoided.

Ultrasonic cutting of the containers is preferably performed by punching out cutting lines in advance and releasing the pre-punched containers from the at least one film web. The advantage of pre-punched is that the tool is not exposed to so much wear, since the cutting tool no longer necessarily has to rest completely on the workbench or guide roll with the relatively powerful force required.

Especially in the production of container prototypes, it is advantageous for film webs to be folded in a frame and for the folded film webs to be moved on a supporting table relative to an ultrasonic welding device in order to shape the containers.

It is particularly preferred to use a method in which the at least one film web is pre-punched in order to create a weakened tearing line to open the container.

It can likewise be provided for at least one film web to be profiled in order to form the weakened tearing line to open the container.

The weakened tearing line is preferably worked in continuously.

It is particularly preferred for the weakened tearing line to be formed by pre-punching or profiling by means of ultrasound. The tearing line ought preferably to be curved, in order to ensure an even transfer of energy during production of the tearing line.

It is also especially preferable if, in the case of a container manufactured from a multi-layer laminate, an inner film web of the container is designed more weakly in order to form the tearing line.

In addition, it can preferably be provided for a film web of the container to be weakened to form the tearing line before lamination of the film web.

The second object is achieved by a production facility for manufacturing thin-walled containers from film webs according to the method described above with advancing means for continuously feeding at least one film web, folding means for creating a tubular structure from at least one film web and for forming at least one fold projecting into the tubular structure, and at least one ultrasonic welding device for joining portions of film webs of the folded tubular structure lying flat and parallel on top of one another in order to form the containers.

A first embodiment of the production facility is characterised by two advancing means for continuously feeding one film web in each case, the advancing means being designed such that the film webs are capable of being guided over one another such that they are flat and parallel, an ultrasonic welding device for joining the longitudinal side edges of the film webs lying on top of one another being disposed in the region of the lateral edges in each case.

A second embodiment of the production facility is characterised by having two advancing means for continuously feeding one top-film web each, the advancing means being designed in such a way that the top-film webs are guided over one another such that they are flat and parallel, and two further advancing means for continuously feeding one side-film web towards the lateral edges of the top-film webs lying flat and parallel, one ultrasonic welding device being disposed in each case to join together the longitudinal lateral edges of the adjacent top and side-film webs in the region of the lateral edges.

It is particularly advantageous if the ultrasonic welding device has a supporting table with ultrasonic vibrations applied to it for the film webs and a tool in contact with the film webs and the supporting table in the region of the junction points to be created. In this way, the tool can be easily adapted to the shape of the container to be manufactured, without the need to consider active parts of the ultrasonic generator or the propagation of waves in the tool.

The invention will now be described in more detail with reference to the attached drawings, in which:

Fig. 1a shows a section view of a tubular structure which has been manufactured from a film web that has been folded back and welded along the longitudinal edge;

Fig. 1b shows a section view of the structure according to Fig. 1a with two diametrically opposing W-shaped folds;

Fig. 1c shows a section view of the structure according to Fig. 1b after drawing;

Fig. 2 shows a perspective view of the folded structure with two diametrically opposing W-shaped folds for subsequently producing containers;

Fig. 3 shows a schematic section view of the folded structure from Figures 1 and 2;

Fig. 4 shows a perspective view of a first embodiment of a production facility of the invention for producing tubular structures from two film webs;

Fig. 5 shows a schematic section view of a structure produced from two film webs in accordance with an alternative embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 6 shows a schematic section view of a folded structure made from two top-film webs and two side-film webs in accordance with a third embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 7 shows a perspective view of a second embodiment of a production facility for manufacturing tubular structures from two top-film webs and two side-film webs;

Fig. 8 shows a perspective view of an ultrasonic-welding device for shaping containers from folded tubular structures;

Fig. 9 shows a perspective view of an ultrasonic-welding device for sealing filled containers;

Fig. 10 shows a schematic section view of a sealing seam with an adjacent loop;

Fig. 11 shows a perspective view of a folded structure with sealing seams;

Fig. 12 shows a schematic representation of saw-tooth-shaped or curved junction seams;

Fig. 13 shows a perspective sketch of a guide roll with a structure fed obliquely towards the guide roll;

Fig. 14 shows a schematic view of containers with curved tearing seams.

Figs. 1 a) to c) each show a section view of a tubular structure 1, which is produced from a film web folded over and fused at the longitudinal edge of mutually adjacent lateral edges 2. At two preferably diametrically opposing positions, the structure 1 is folded inwards. The folds 3 are preferably W-shaped. After that, the folded structure 1 is stretched, and then later on, the containers are shaped from the stretched structure 1 by ultrasonic welding and cutting.

The folds 3 serve here as bottoms for the containers to stand on. As can be seen from the perspective representation of the folded structure in Fig. 2, two container parts A per longitudinal portion can be produced in each case by cutting the structure 1 in the longitudinal direction. In order to make optimum use of the material, especially for the shaped containers with curved contours, the two diametrically opposing containers and their printed material should be symmetrical mirror images of one another.

Fig. 3 shows the structure 1 in a schematic section view. This makes it clear that a film web is folded over and welded together at the lateral edges 2 lying on top of one another. Next to the fused lateral edges 2 the structure 1 is folded in in order to form a first W-shaped fold 3. A further fold 3 is provided diametrically opposite the first fold 3, the folds 3 each forming a bottom for the container to stand on when it is produced.

Fig. 4 shows a production facility for manufacturing a tubular structure 1 from a film web 4, which is continuously unwound from a drum and guided by guide rollers 5 over a shaping wedge 6 and calender rolls 7 to fold the film web 4 over. At the upper edge of the folded film web, i.e. in the region of the longitudinal lateral edges, an ultrasonic welding device 8 is provided, in order to fuse together the mutually adjacent longitudinal lateral edges and thus to form the tubular structure 1. The ultrasonic welding device 8 has a fixed supporting table 9 to which an ultrasonic vibration is applied by means of a sonotrode, and a pressure roll 10 for pressing the longitudinal lateral edges of the film web 1 onto the supporting table 9. As a result of the pressure contact and the ultrasonic vibration, the film webs 1 located between the pressure roll 10 and the supporting table 9 are fused together.

Downstream of the ultrasonic welding device 8, further guide rolls 11 and 12 are provided. During the manufacture of the tubular structure 1, compressed air is blown into the structure 1 via a feed line 13, the guide rolls 11, 12 retaining the compressed air in the structure 1 and ensuring that the structure 1 is blown up into a hose-shaped balloon. By means of two plates 14 which act on the expanded structure 1 from the outside, the diametrically opposing W-shaped folds 3 are produced,

the folds 3 being fixed with calender rolls 15 by drawing the folded structure 1. The folded and drawn structure 1 is then fed in a horizontal position in feed direction X to an ultrasonic welding punch and/or ultrasonic cutting punch in which the container seams and, optionally, sealing seams are formed and the containers are punched out.

Fig. 5 shows a second embodiment of a structure 1a, which is formed by fusing two film webs 4a, 4b lying flat and parallel on top of one another, which may be of the same or different widths as desired. The bottom for a container to stand on can be produced from one film web or both film webs as desired. It becomes clear that a seam 2 is accordingly provided in the longitudinal direction on both longitudinal lateral edges of the film webs 4a, 4b. Each seam 2 can be executed as a straight or curved line or as an area of variable width and can in this way increase the solidity and stability of the container.

Fig. 6 indicates a third embodiment of a structure 1b, which comprises two top-film webs 4a, 4b lying flat and parallel on top of one another and two V-shaped side-film webs 16 folded inwards. In order to produce a folded structure 1b, the respective adjacent longitudinal lateral edges of the top and side-film webs 4a, 16 or 4b, 16 respectively are fused together ultrasonically.

Fig. 7 indicates an embodiment of a production facility for manufacturing the structure according to Fig. 6 with top and side-film webs 4a, 4b, 16a, 16b. The top-film webs 4a, 4b are first of all continuously unrolled from drums and guided flat and parallel to one another by guide rolls 5. Lateral guide rolls 17 are then used to urge apart the longitudinal lateral edges of the top guide webs 4a, 4b, which are guided by U-shaped bent deflection sheets 18. Side-film webs 16a, 16b, which are likewise continuously unrolled from drums, are then guided into these upwardly bent longitudinal lateral edges of the top-film webs 4a, 4b. Using ultrasonic welding devices 8 at both lateral edges of the top-film webs 4, the mutually adjacent longitudinal lateral edges both of a top-film web 4 and of a side-film web 16 are fused together, and in this way a hose-shaped folded structure 1b is produced. After that, the folded structure 1b is stretched with a stretching device 19 and fed horizontally to an ultrasonic welding/cutting device 20 to produce the longitudinal and transverse sealing seams and

separation points for the containers. The ultrasonic welding/cutting device 20 has a supporting table 21 with ultrasonic vibrations applied and a forming roll 22 with the contours of the seams and separation points to be formed. The supporting table 21 is flat and can thus be used universally. Only the passive forming roll 22 needs to be adapted to the contours to be created.

Fig. 8 indicates a different embodiment of an ultrasonic welding/cutting device 20 for forming the containers 23 from the folded structures 1. In this case, the seams and cutting points are formed with a corresponding passive punch 24, which is pressed onto an active supporting table 21 with ultrasonic vibrations applied to it.

It can further be seen from Fig. 8 that a metal strip 25 is inserted into the fold 3, which serves on the one hand to form the fold 3 and, on the other hand, is designed in such a way that no seam point is created in the region of the metal strip 25. In this way, when transverse seams are produced, only the corners of the W-shaped folds 3 need to be fused together, thus creating a container bottom which can stand securely, and whose standing surface will automatically be enlarged to the optimum extent because of the weight of the product with which it is filled.

As an alternative to this, the fusing or sealing of certain layers or regions can be prevented by a revolving disc, a cutting member which can be swung out by an articulation, or a material applied to the film web e.g. release varnish).

After the container 23 has been filled, the upper opening is sealed in a known manner. This can be done, as shown in Fig. 9 for example, by means of continuous ultrasonic welding by the ultrasonic welding device 8.

Fig. 10 shows a section of a container 23 with a sealing seam 26, which is provided for sealing purposes and to prevent the unintentional tearing of the container 23 in the region where the film web 4 is buckled. In the event that the sealing seam 26 leaks or fails, the buckling point in the film web 4 forms a loop 27 adjacent to the sealing seam, in which any fluid unintentionally escaping

through the sealing seam 26 is trapped. Furthermore, the formation of loops 27 acts as a precaution against possible damage especially to the multi-layer films at the sharp buckling points.

Fig. 11 indicates a perspective view of a folded structure 1, in which sealing seams 26 are provided at each of the three buckling points in the folds 3, which extend in the longitudinal direction X. The sealing seams 26 are advantageous particularly at these buckling points, because these buckling points are the weakest parts of the container 23.

In order to make reliable fusing or sealing of more than one layer of material possible, the longitudinal and transverse sealing ought to be performed at different stations. Via sealing stations upstream, the film web 4 is sealed along the longitudinal seams before entering cylinder sealing stations. The cylinder sealing station then effects the transverse sealing.

Alternatively, it is also possible first to seal only the inner central fold of the W-shaped fold 3.

It is also possible, in the region of thicker layers of material, to adapt the geometric shape of the tool and/or of the supporting table locally, by, for example, forming indentations / elevations in the sealing or cutting edges.

In the production of ultrasonic welding seams, attention should be paid to ensuring an even transfer of energy to the film webs 4. For this reason, any transverse seams which form suddenly, involving changing power input requirements, should be avoided. For this purpose, it is proposed that the seams 28 should be designed with a saw-tooth shape, for example (such as at an angle of about 5°), or curved, as shown in Figure 12. In that case, however, the cutting lines 29 ought preferably to be straight, for optical reasons.

An even transfer of energy can also be achieved, as sketched in Fig. 13, by feeding the film web 4 obliquely towards a guide roll 30, with an ultrasonic welding device 8 either acting directly on the

guide roll or adjacent to it. The angle of attack is preferably about 2 to 5° and determines the geometry of the working edges on the guide roll 30.

Fig. 14 shows a container 23 in a frontal view with a tearing line 31. The tearing line 31 is preferably created by weakening the film web 4, wherein, for example, an inner film web is optionally discontinuously perforated or continuously pre-punched and/or profiled. This can be done, for example, by a profiled roll before or after lamination of a film web, which is moved along the tearing line 31 on an ultrasound supporting table.

The tearing line 31 is preferably curved in order to ensure the optimum input of energy and ease of opening.

The features of the invention disclosed in the above description, in the claims and in the drawings may be essential either individually or in any combination in order to carry out the invention in its various embodiments.

Claims

1. A method of manufacturing thin-walled containers (23) from film webs (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) comprising the steps of:
 - a) manufacturing a tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b) from at least one film web (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b);
 - b) forming at least one fold (3) projecting into the tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b);
 - c) ultrasonically joining sections of film webs (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) of the folded tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b) lying flat and parallel on top of one another to form the containers (23) .
2. The method as claimed in Claim 1, characterised in that the tubular structure (1) is produced from a film web (4) by folding over the film web (4) in the longitudinal direction of the film web (4) and joining together the adjacent lateral edges of the folded film web (4).
3. The method as claimed in Claim 1, characterised in that the tubular structure (1a) is manufactured from two film webs (4a, 4b) lying flat and parallel on top of one another, by joining together the adjacent lateral edges of each of the two film webs (4a, 4b).
4. The method as claimed in Claim 1, characterised in that the tubular structure (1b) is manufactured by placing two flat, parallel top-film webs (4a, 4b) together, one on top of the other, moving one side-film web (16a, 16b) in each case to the lateral edges of the flat, parallel top-film webs (4a, 4b) lying on top of the other, folding in the side-film webs (16a, 16b) and joining the respective mutually adjacent lateral edges of a side (16a, 16b) and top-film web (4a, 4b).
5. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that two diametrically opposing folds (3) are formed in the tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b).

6. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the folds (3) are W-shaped.
7. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that ultrasonic welding and ultrasonic cutting are used to shape the contours of the container (23) in the area between the two diametrically opposing folds (3), and that the area of the folds (3) is designed as the bottom for the container (23) to stand on.
8. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised by blowing compressed air into the at least one film web (4) while manufacturing the tubular structure (1).
9. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised by an intermediate layer in the fold (3), the intermediate layer being designed in such a way that the film webs (4, 16) are prevented from fusing in the area of the intermediate layer.
10. The method as claimed in claim 9, characterised in that the intermediate layer is a metal coating joined integrally to the at least one film web (4, 16).
11. The method as claimed in Claim 9, characterised in that the intermediate layer is a travelling disc rotating in the fold (3).
12. The method as claimed in Claim 9, characterised in that the intermediate layer is a metal strip used to form the fold (3).
13. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the film webs (4, 16) are fused together in the vicinity of their folding edges in the longitudinal direction of the tubular structure (1) in order to form sealing seams (26).

14. The method as claimed in Claim 13, characterised in that the folding edges located beside a sealing seam (26) form a loop (27) in cross-section.
15. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that transverse sealing seams in the film webs (4, 16) are designed in a saw-tooth shape.
16. The method as claimed in Claim 15, characterised in that the transverse sealing seams form curved lines, and cutting edges of the containers (23) are designed straight.
17. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised by feeding the film web (4, 16) obliquely towards a rotating guide roll (30) and subsequently performing ultrasonic welding with an ultrasonic welding device (8).
18. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised by ultrasonic cutting of the containers (23) comprising the steps of: by punching out cutting lines in advance and releasing the pre-punched containers (23) from the at least one film web (4, 16).
19. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the film webs (4, 16) are folded in a frame and the folded film webs (4, 16) are moved on a supporting table relative to an ultrasonic welding device (8) in order to shape the containers (23).
20. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that at least one film web (4, 16) is pre-punched in order to create a weakened tearing line (31) to open the container (23).
21. A method as claimed in any of the preceding Claims, characterised in that at least one film web (4, 16) is profiled in order to form the weakened tearing line (31) to open the container (23).
22. The method as claimed in either of Claims 20 or 21, characterised in that the weakened tearing line (31) is worked in continuously.

23. The method as claimed in either of Claims 20 or 21, characterised in that the weakened tearing line (31) is formed by pre-punching or profiling by means of ultrasound.
24. A method as claimed in any of Claims 20 to 23, characterised in that the tearing line (31) is designed in a curved shape.
25. A method as claimed in any of Claims 20 to 24, characterised in that, in the case of a container (23) manufactured from a multi-layer laminate, an inner film web (4, 16) of the container (23) is designed more weakly in order to form the tearing line (31).
26. A method as claimed in any of Claims 20 to 25, characterised in that a film web (4, 16) of the container (23) is weakened to form the tearing line (31) before lamination of the film web.
27. A production facility for manufacturing thin-walled containers (23) from film webs (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) according to the method claimed in any of the preceding Claims, with advancing means for continuously feeding at least one film web (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b), folding means for creating a tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b) from at least one film web (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) and for forming at least one fold (3) projecting into the tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b), and with at least one ultrasonic welding device (8) for joining portions of film webs (4, 4a, 4b, 16, 16a, 16b) of the folded tubular structure (1, 1a, 1b) lying flat and parallel on top of one another in order to form the containers (23).
28. The production facility as claimed in Claim 27, characterised by two advancing means for continuously feeding one film web (4a, 4b) in each case, the advancing means being designed such that the film webs (4a, 4b) are capable of being guided over one another such that they are flat and parallel, wherein an ultrasonic welding device (8) for joining the longitudinal side edges of the film webs (4a, 4b) lying on top of one another is disposed in the region of the lateral edges in each case.

29. The production facility as claimed in Claim 27, characterised by two advancing means for continuously feeding one top-film web (4a, 4b) each, the advancing means being designed in such a way that the top-film webs (4a, 4b) are guided over one another such that they are flat and parallel, and two further advancing means for continuously feeding one side-film web (16a, 16b) in each case towards the lateral edges of the top-film webs (4a, 4b) lying flat and parallel, one ultrasonic welding device (8) being disposed in each case to join together the longitudinal lateral edges of the adjacent top and side-film webs (4, 16) in the region of the lateral edges.

30. A production facility as claimed in any of Claims 27 to 29, characterised in that the ultrasonic welding device (8) has a supporting table (9) with ultrasonic vibrations applied to it for the film webs (4, 16) and a tool (10) in contact with the film webs (4, 16) and the supporting table (9) in the region of the junction points to be created.

1 / 6

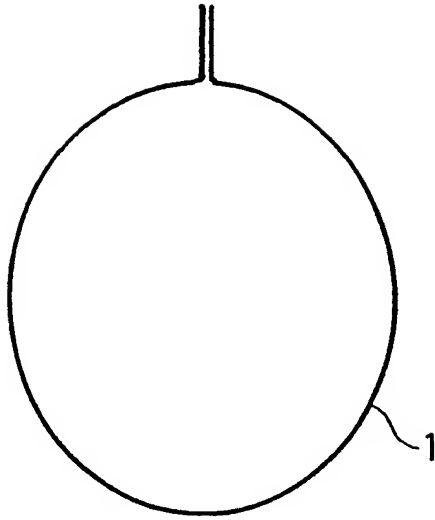


Fig. 1a

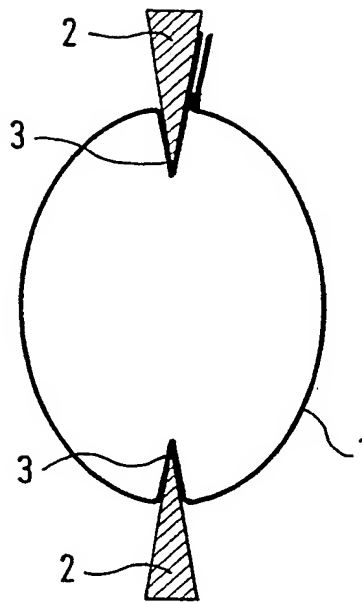


Fig. 1b

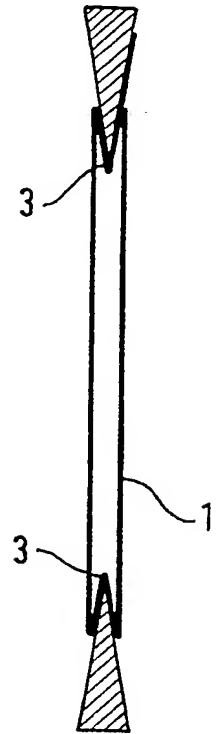


Fig. 1c

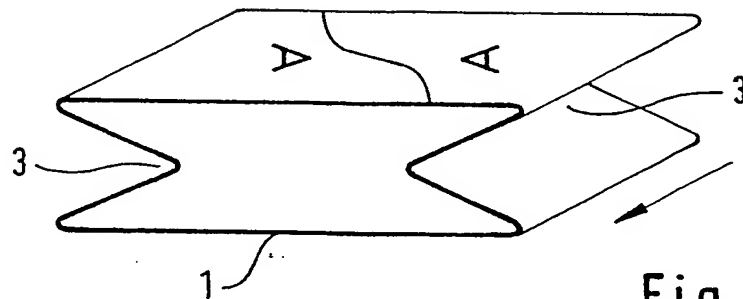


Fig. 2

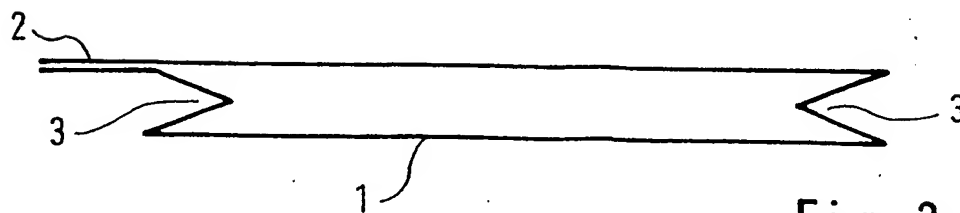


Fig. 3

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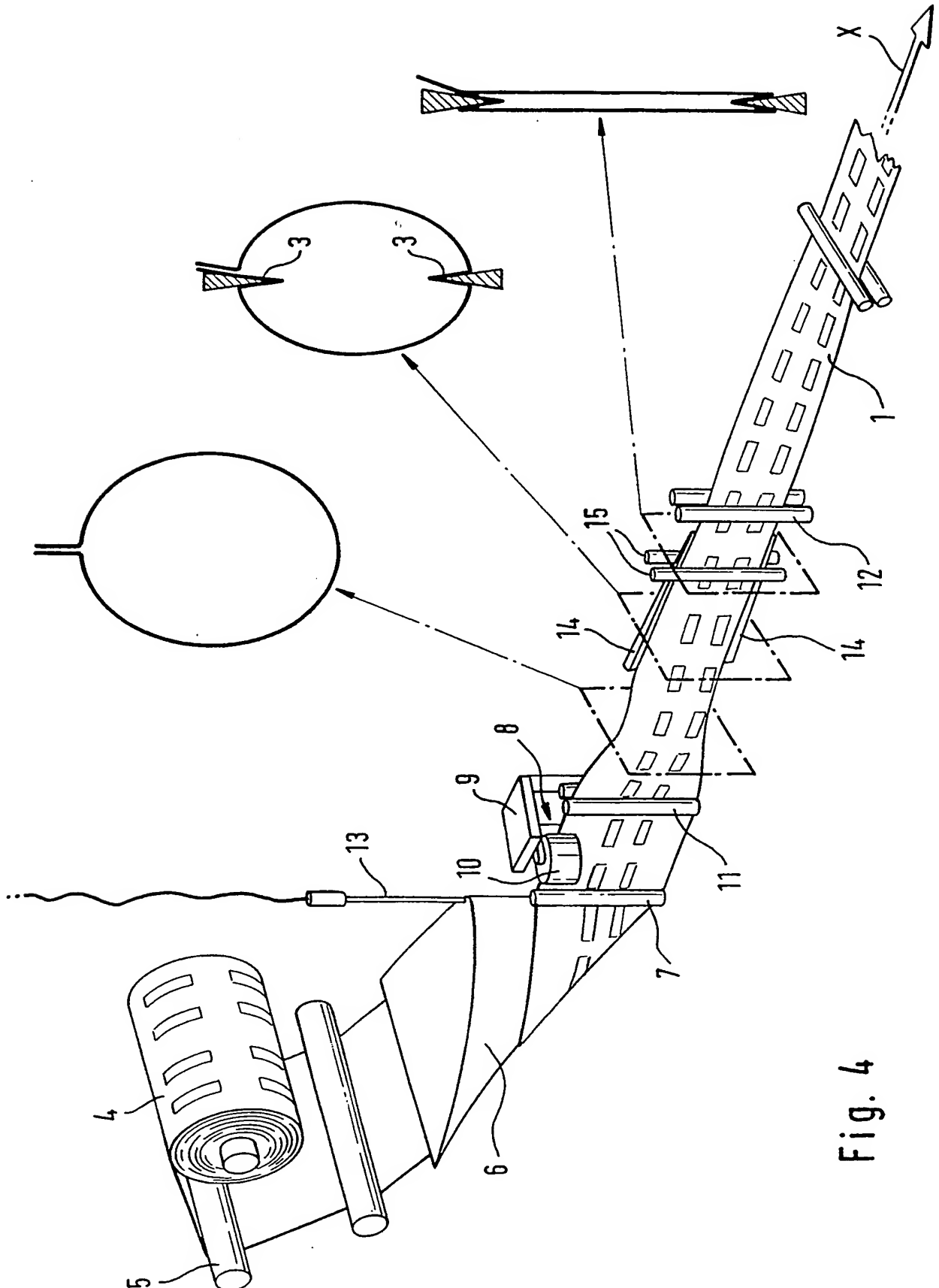


Fig. 4

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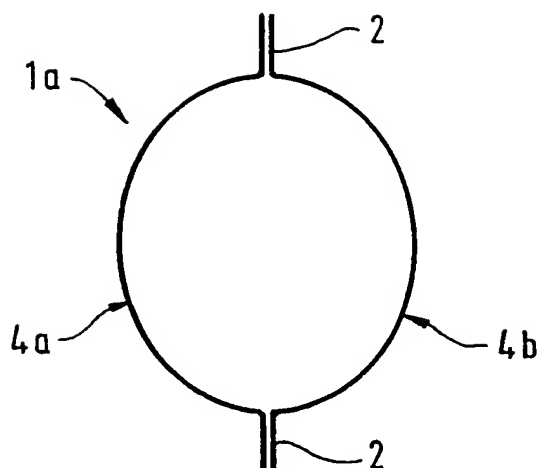


Fig. 5

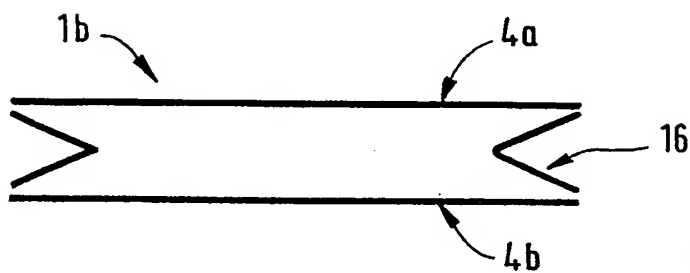


Fig. 6

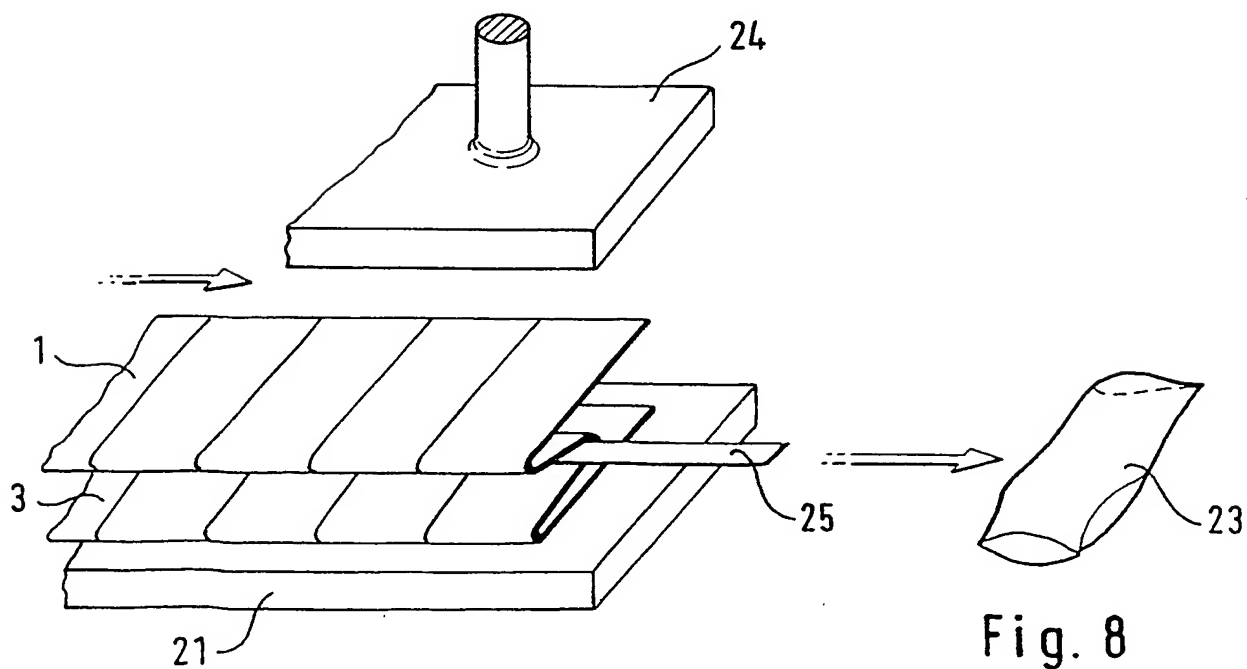


Fig. 8

4 / 6

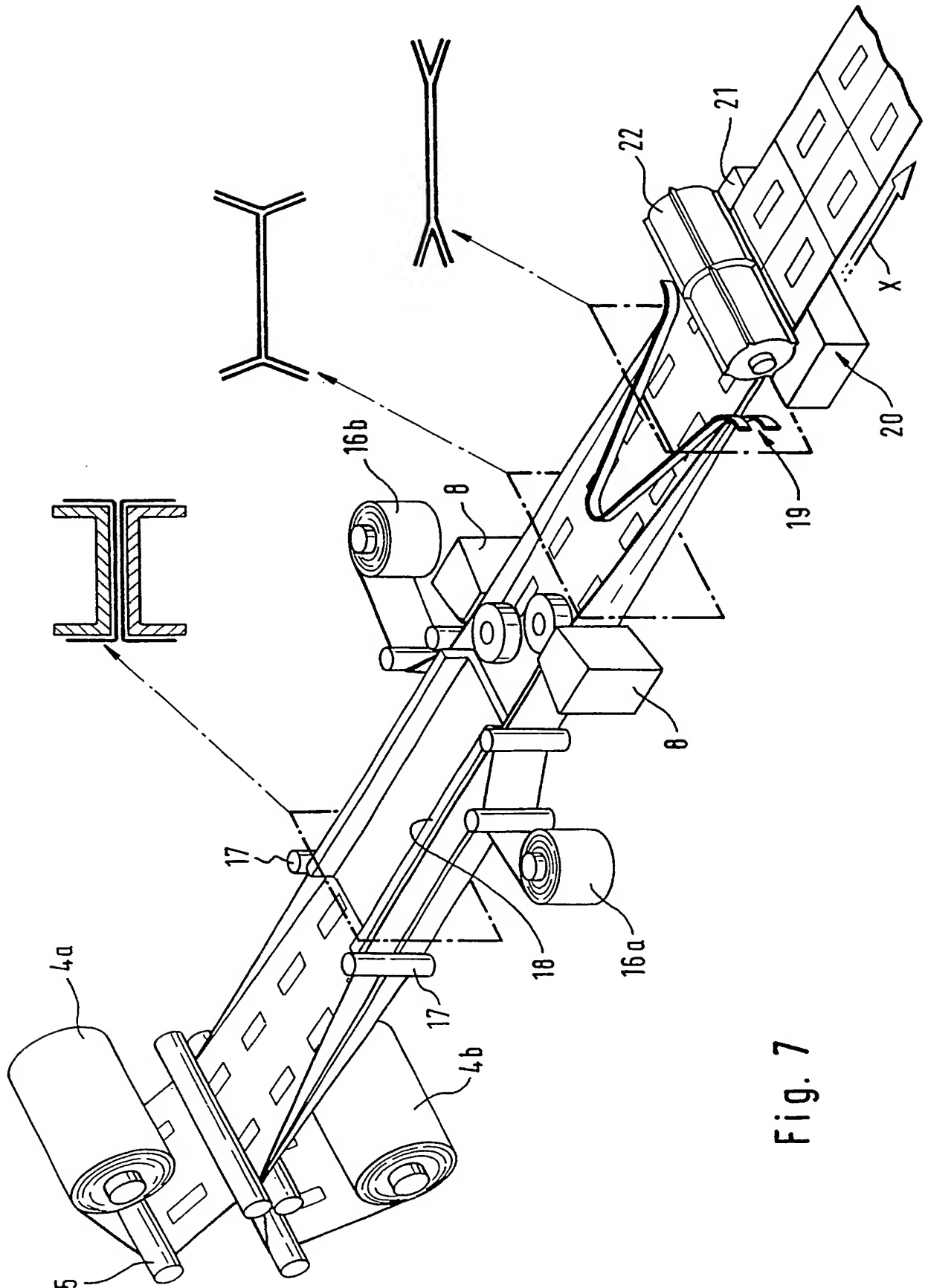


Fig. 7

5 / 6

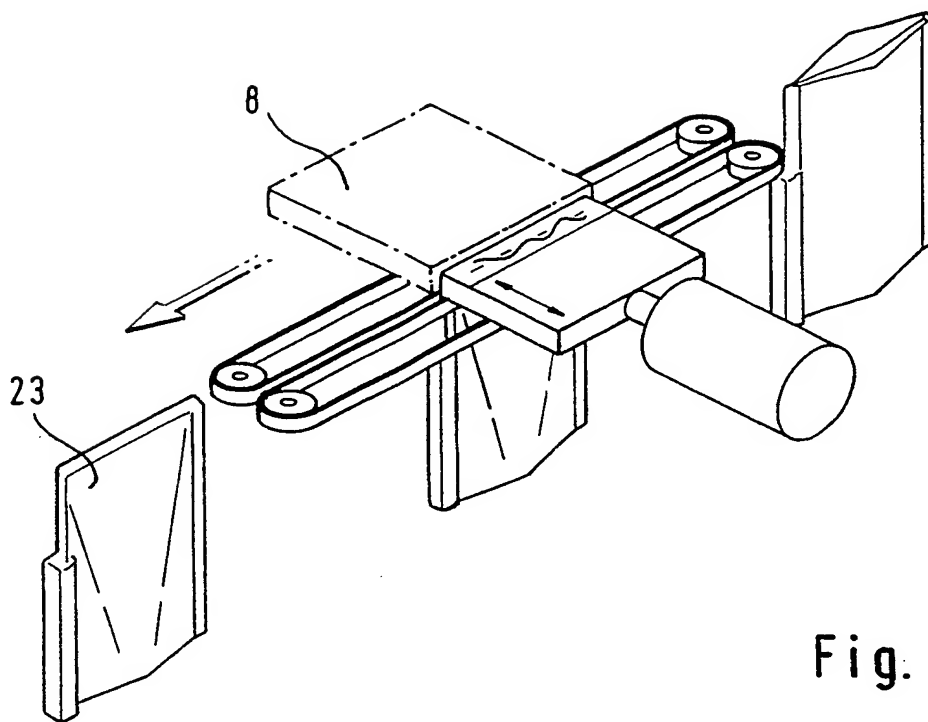


Fig. 9

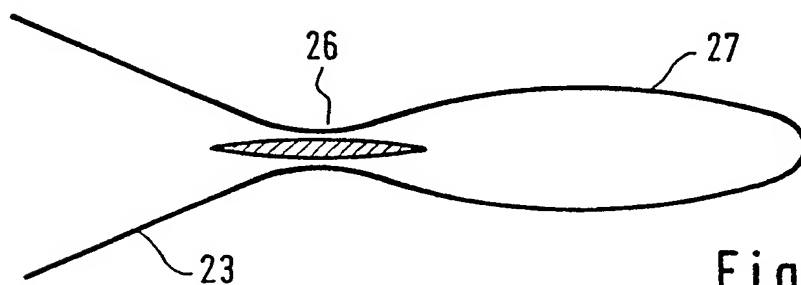


Fig. 10

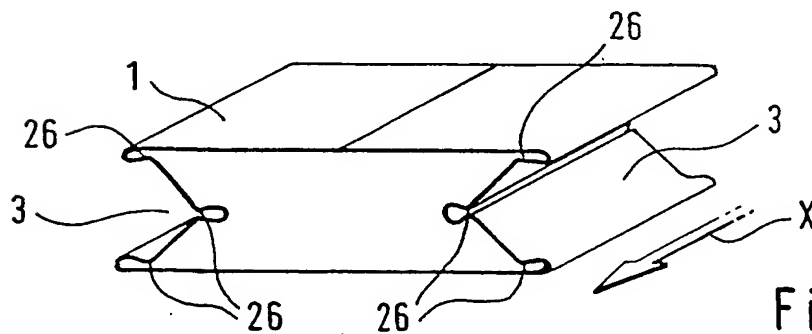


Fig. 11

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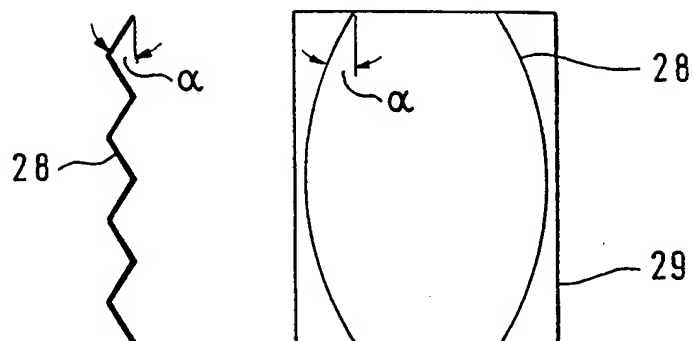


Fig. 12

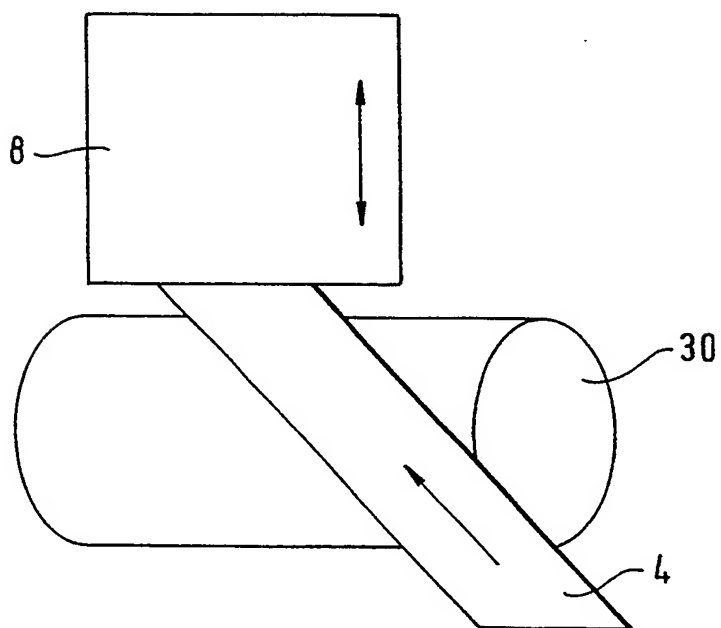


Fig. 13

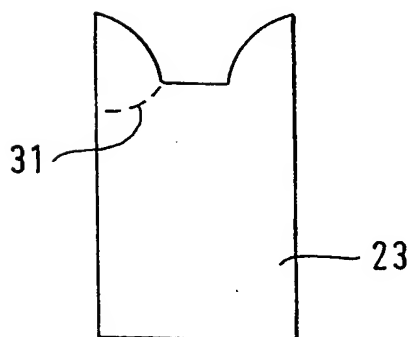


Fig. 14a

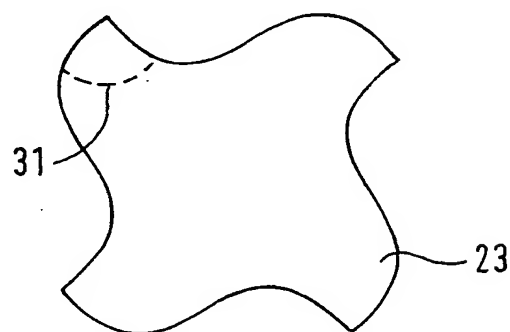


Fig. 14b

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 B65B51/22 B65B43/04 B65B43/06 B31B23/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 B65B B31B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the International search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	FR 2 587 935 A (CANTENOT FRANCOIS) 3 April 1987 (1987-04-03)	1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 30
Y	the whole document	20-26
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X	GB 957 487 A (ERIK JOHANSEN; PETER SKJODE KNUDSEN) 6 May 1964 (1964-05-06) abstract; figures 1-9	1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 30
X	US 4 517 790 A (KREAGER WILLIAM D) 21 May 1985 (1985-05-21) column 1, line 13 - line 66; figure 1	1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 30
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☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the International search

19 March 2004

Date of mailing of the International search report

21 04. 2004

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Authorized officer

Damiani, A

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/EP 03/06232

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 6 062 002 A (LEES JOHN ET AL) 16 May 2000 (2000-05-16) abstract; figures 8,9 ----	1, 27, 30
A	GB 1 214 709 A (KLEER-VU INDUSTRIES) 2 December 1970 (1970-12-02) page 1, line 42 - line 66 ----	1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 30
A	US 4 569 474 A (BUSCHOR JOSEF J ET AL) 11 February 1986 (1986-02-11) figures 3A-3D ----	1, 2, 5, 6, 27, 30
A	US 5 202 065 A (HINLEY ROBERT W ET AL) 13 April 1993 (1993-04-13) the whole document -----	20-26

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.
PCT/EP 03/06232

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the International Application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful International Search can be carried out, specifically:
3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this International application, as follows:

see additional sheet

As a result of the prior review under R. 40.2(e) PCT,
all additional fees are to be refunded.

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. ☒ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
1,2,5,6,20-26,27,30
4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this International Search Report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

- ☒ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.
☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

This International Searching Authority found multiple (groups of) inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. Claims: 1,2,5,6,27,30

Manufacturing containers from one film web

1.1. Claims: 1,2,27,30

Manufacturing containers from one film web

1.2. Claim : 5

Manufacturing containers with two diametrically opposing folds

1.3. Claim : 6

Manufacturing containers with W-shaped folds

2. Claims: 3, 4, 28, 29

Manufacturing containers from two film webs

3. Claims: 7, 19

Manufacturing containers and shaping them

4. Claim : 8

Manufacturing containers with the use of compressed air

5. Claims: 9-12

Manufacturing containers using an intermediate layer

6. Claims: 13-16

Manufacturing containers with special sealing seams

7. Claim : 17

Manufacturing containers while obliquely feeding the web

8. Claim : 18

Manufacturing containers by punching out cutting lines

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/SA/ 210

9. Claims: 20-26

Manufacturing containers with tearing lines

Please note that all inventions mentioned under item 1, although not necessarily linked by a common inventive concept, could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/E/06232

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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